

An Investigation of the Operations of Children's Homes in Ghana

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### **Abstract**

In recent decades, Ghana has experienced an orphan crisis, facing increased numbers of youth in children's homes and residential living. To achieve family reunification for Ghanaian youth, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) created initiatives in 2010 to investigate and de-emphasize the reliance on children's homes. Aside from the DSW's investigations, minimal academic research exists to discuss the operations of Ghana's children's homes. Thus, the purpose of this research was to investigate the operations and needs of children's homes in Ghana. Using a qualitative approach, data were gathered through interviews conducted with staff members of four children's homes throughout Ghana to gain a staff perspective. The researcher administered a survey that investigated the funding of the children's homes, the daily duties of the staff members, the interactions with the surrounding community, the daily schedule of the children, and the resources available to the home. The research findings indicate ten themes that emerged concerning the operations and needs of children's homes in Ghana. Five themes emerged under research question one, which focused on the operations of children's homes in Ghana. These themes include a lack of funding, education, food, health care, and a sense of familiness. Under research question two, which focused on the needs of children's homes in Ghana, five themes emerged including inadequate housing, health care, food and water, education, and money. These findings have implications for the DSW, other governmental organizations in Ghana working with child welfare policy, and the international aid community.

**Dedication**

To Michael, for showing me the magic and beauty that lies within the heart of every child, even  
in the worst of circumstances.

### **Acknowledgements**

This project would not have been possible without the support of many people. Much thanks to my advisor, Dr. Meshelemiah, who has given up numerous hours to patiently mentor me into becoming a researcher and inspire me to pursue this research with professionalism, perseverance and enthusiasm. Additionally, this project would not have been possible without the College of Social Work at The Ohio State University - Thank you for the continued support I have experienced from the time I started my career at Ohio State, and for making my research possible through providing financial support and resources to empower me to fulfill my thesis goals. Thank you to my family for always believing in me, even when I do not see my potential to achieve. Finally, thanks to my husband, Francis Akumanyi, who has cheered me on throughout this process and encouraged me to go the extra mile.

**Vita**

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**Field of Study**

Major field: Social Work

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter the researcher will discuss the recent influx of children's homes across Ghana and the resulting implications it is having on the vulnerable and orphaned children in the country. Additionally, the researcher will detail the purpose of the research study, the rationale for the study, the theoretical framework of the Ecological Perspective approach that informed the research study, the research questions, the contributions to the profession of social work, and the conceptualization of terms used throughout this document.

### **Statement of the Problem**

World-wide, over 153 million children have been identified as orphans, who constitute a child who has lost one or both of their parents according to the United Nations (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], United States Agency for International Development [USAID], World Health Organization [WHO], United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], & United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2010). Recent research has shown that the loss of caregivers for orphaned and vulnerable youth puts these children's current and future well-being at risk through experiences with a multitude of negative factors including toxic stress, poor health, malnutrition, lack of strong relationships with caregivers, decreased cognitive functioning, stunted growth, neglect, abuse, isolation, stigmatization, abandonment, and child labor (United States Government, 2012). These findings are especially relevant to Ghana, a country in Sub-Saharan Africa that is challenged by a continually growing orphan population.

In Ghana, children 18 or under constitute almost half of the population (National Population Council, 2004), and of those children, orphans constitute up to 12 percent of them

(Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare [MESW] & UNICEF, 2010). As the population of vulnerable children needing care grows, the number of residential children's homes in Ghana have increased from less than five to almost 150 (Department of Social Welfare [DSW], 2011c). Rising numbers in orphans and children's homes to support these at-risk youth have led to investigations by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), the government statutory agency that has the mandate to regulate the operations of children's homes in Ghana (DSW, 2011d). The DSW has shown numerous injustices committed against orphans in placing them in what has become overcrowded children's homes that do not have adequate resources to properly care for the youth.

The DSW found current violations in children's homes including insufficiencies in bedding, living space, food, medical supplies, educational opportunities, and vocational opportunities (DSW, 2011c). Furthermore, studies of Ghana's children's homes revealed the institutions do not address the mental well-being of the youth or address potential traumas of family separation or parental loss (Voyk, 2011); the homes are overcrowded and cannot provide housing for the orphans in the only 148 homes available (Colburn, 2010); and the homes do not provide resources for youth transitioning into adulthood who leave the home (Colburn, 2010). Lastly, the DSW has identified operational issues due to limited contact with family or the community, disregard for privacy rights, inappropriate care for disabled children, child labor, low staff to child ratios, too few venues for children to play (DSW, 2011c), and only 9% of the caregivers in the children's homes have proper degree qualifications (MESW, 2010). While not every issue is present in each children's home identified across the country, the noted problems have been found to be significant enough to warrant a need for countrywide change in relation to how the DSW oversees children's homes.

As a result of the recent investigations conducted by the DSW, the DSW is working to create a comprehensive system that governs every home, unlike the current situation where many of the children's homes are not affiliated with the government (DSW et al., 2008). The DSW wants to close many of the children's homes and focus on family reunification programs by redirecting funding (DSW, 2011b), and to do so, the DSW created the Care Reform Initiative (CRI) in 2010 to de-institutionalize Ghana's youth. Progress has been underway since the CRI's beginnings, though it has been a slow process and the children's homes are still operating under low care standards with rising membership.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to investigate the operations of children's homes in Ghana, as well as the basic needs of the homes. With little current research on the children's homes in Ghana, little is known about their daily operations, and thus information needs to be secured to provide an increased understanding on the situation surrounding Ghana's children's homes. Knowledge of the operations of children's homes is important information to understand because of its relevance to the current initiatives and policy implementation occurring within the country, such as the DSW's National Plan of Action (NPA) and Care Reform Initiative (CRI), which seek to address the growing orphan population. Furthermore, increased knowledge of the means of functioning for the children's homes in Ghana is necessary due to the high involvement of international organizations in the management and funding of the children's homes. If international organizations are active within the operations of the homes and they are sending workers and volunteers to support children's home management, then the global community needs a holistic view of children's home in order to best provide support.

**Rationale for the Study**

This study will provide a foundation for further work in Ghana related to the child care system because it will examine how the children's homes function, and thus provide the DSW with increased knowledge on the complex crisis they are trying to address as they establish authority over all children's homes in the country. The findings will inform the DSW with more detailed demographics of privately run homes with whom they are not affiliated, which serves as the majority of the children's homes across the country (MESW, 2010). By speaking with children's home staff about the functioning of the homes, a framework from the perspective of those working in the field and directly experiencing the orphan crisis will be set for the DSW surrounding the negative and positive aspects of the children's homes and the areas needing reformed in the children's home system.

The findings of this research are significant to not only the DSW and partnering public officials involved in the field of orphaned and vulnerable children, but also to Ghanaian policy makers heading child care system reforms across the country. Policy makers will benefit from this research because it will inform those who have not physically visited children's homes about the operations and needs of the home, thus improving the competency and capacity of those shaping child welfare policies to best serve the youth and others impacted by the legislation. The research findings will provide policy makers an insider's perspective on the situation of the children's homes and equip them with the necessary knowledge to begin to understand and address the orphan crisis.

Broadening the research findings' impact, this study will promote a better-informed global community on the operations of children's homes in Ghana and the resulting needs and strengths of the homes. Examining the operations and necessities of children's homes through

interviews with children's home staff members will provide a perspective not often heard by foreigners, and therefore, a more complete picture of Ghana's child welfare system will be developed. A better informed global community will lead to better aid efforts from international partners, allowing these supporters to target the most immediate short-term and long-term needs for more sustainable solutions. Furthermore, this research also has the potential for scholarly publications in the area of child care. Currently, there are publications on the reforms and future goals of child care systems, but very little research on firsthand accounts of the operations of children's homes from the perspective of staff members. Past studies involving the operations of children's homes include Voyk's "Orphan Vulnerability, NGOs and HIV/AIDS in Ghana", Deter's "Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Ghana", and "Orphanages of Accra: A Comparative Case Study on Orphan Care and Social Work Practices".

**Theoretical Framework:**

In this study, the researcher used the Ecological Perspective framework as the foundation of this endeavor. The Ecological Perspective is the social work profession's theory that outlines the importance of living environments in understanding people (Ashford, LeCroy, & Lortie, 2006). The theory is concerned with the mutual influence of the interactions between humans and their environments, and how these interactions support the growth of human beings (Ashford, LeCroy, & Lortie, 2006). The Ecological Perspective divides the environmental component of the theory into four systems including the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. In this research, the children's home represents the microsystem, and the other systems are the local and broader surrounding organizations, people, and institutions interacting with the children's homes in Ghana. The researcher will examine the interactions of the four levels of systems that surround the children's home to understand how

the environmental systems benefit or hinder the operations and needs of Ghana's children's homes. This researcher's goal in utilizing the Ecological Perspective is to find ways to enhance the interactions between Ghana's children's homes and their surrounding environment to improve the functioning capabilities of the homes.

### **Research Questions**

In an attempt to explore the operations of children's homes in Ghana at children's home sites in Achiase, Somanya, and Kasoa, the researcher proposed the following research questions. They are as follows:

1. What are the staff's perceptions of the daily operations of children's homes in Ghana?
2. What are the staff's perceptions of the basic needs of the homes in Ghana?

### **Contributions to the Profession of Social Work**

This study positively impacts the social work profession by providing insight into Ghana's child care system. It is especially relevant to the social work fields of child welfare and human rights because it examines the operations and needs of children's homes, informing social work professionals about the human rights being violated within children's homes. Increased knowledge on the orphan crisis occurring in Ghana will give social workers an understanding of what has occurred in Ghana's children's homes, how to evaluate current children's home reforms, and what directions to pursue for future interventions. As a profession, social workers are dedicated to serving and empowering the most needy and vulnerable populations, which includes youth. The current orphan crisis in Ghana must unite Ghana's social workers to create solutions and better living situations for orphaned youth. Social workers can best respond to the orphan crisis through understanding the complexity of the situation facing children's homes. This research will serve as a means to educate the profession on the current operations of



children's homes. Overall, social workers can serve as change agents in Ghana, as well as globally.

### **Operationalization of the Terms**

The following are terms in operational form as they were used in this research endeavor.

They are as follow.

**Children's Home:** Residential homes that serve vulnerable and needy children including but not limited to orphans.

**Children's Home Staff:** An individual who is employed in a children's home in Ghana and who self-identified as 18 years of age or above.

**Ghana:** A country on the coast of West Africa, bordered by Cote d'Ivoire and Togo

**Needs of Children's Homes:** The basic needs of the children's home consist of physical, psychological, and social needs of the children, the home staff, and the home.

**Operations of Children's Homes:** The Operations include the daily duties of the staff members, the interactions with the surrounding community, the daily schedule of the children, and the resources available to the home.

**Orphan:** By Ghana's definition, an orphan constitutes a child under the age of 18 who has no surviving parents.

**Summary of Chapter One**

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the global orphan crisis, and more specifically, how the orphan crisis has impacted the quality of life for youth in Ghana's children's homes. Chapter one also detailed the purpose of the research study, which was to investigate the operations and basic needs of children's homes in Ghana, in order to gain further knowledge on the orphan crisis and how that has impacted Ghana's children's homes. Improved understandings of the operations of children's homes are critical due to the current reforms and policies being undertaken by the DSW to address the growing orphan population. The rationale behind the research study comes from its significance in providing detailed information on the operations of children's homes in Ghana allowing for better informed practice and support for the DSW, Ghanaian policy makers, the international aid community, and the social work profession. Furthermore, the research study was guided from a framework using the Ecological Perspective, which focuses on the implications of the relationships between the subject of focus and its surrounding environmental systems. The Researcher used the Ecological Perspective as a basis for this study's two main research questions, which included: "What are the staff's perceptions of the daily operations of children's homes in Ghana?" and "what are the staff's perceptions of the basic needs of the homes in Ghana?". Framing the study with these questions allowed the researcher to evaluate responses in terms of the Ecological Perspective because the research questions are structured in a manner to bring forth issues related to this theory and inform the researcher on how the systems interacting with Ghana's children's homes promote or hinder the survival and growth of the homes.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter the researcher will discuss the current body of research surrounding the global orphan crisis, and more specifically the situation surrounding the orphan crisis in Ghana, West Africa. In this literature review, the researcher investigates current research detailing the impact of the orphan crisis in relation to Ghana, the implications of the increase in children who are institutionalized across Ghana, the theoretical framework surrounding Ghana's orphaned youth and children's homes, and how Ghana has responded to the dramatic increase in orphans and children's homes over the past few decades.

Globally, individuals, communities and countries are facing an orphan crisis. World-wide over 153 million children have been identified as orphans, who constitute a child who has lost one or both of their parents according to the United Nation's (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], United States Agency for International Development [USAID], World Health Organization [WHO], United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], & United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2010). Of these figures, about 18 million of these youth have lost both parents, many having died of AIDS, and are considered "double orphans" (UNICEF, USAID, WHO, UNFPA, & UNESCO, 2010). Much of the orphan crisis has been fueled by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, plaguing families across the world and worsening the conditions of those in poverty and their ability to care for needy children (Assistance of Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act of 2005). As a result of this continually growing issue and worsening standards of living for orphans, various individuals, countries, and organizations have taken interest in addressing this problem to

protect the world's youth (U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID], 2013). For example, the United Nations held the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990, which outlined the legal guidelines for countries and international support to address the proper care and treatment of children. The CRC is a universal agreement to uphold a non-negotiable set of standards of human rights, which provides a minimum level of entitlements and freedoms respected by all governments (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). The CRC held the family responsible for the protection and care of children alongside the government having a responsibility to protect, preserve, and support the child-family relationship through programs, policies, and aid (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). Furthermore, the United States has initiated a variety of efforts to extend foreign aid and solve the orphan crisis such as Public Law 109-95, which is a call for a holistic and coordinated response from the United States government to aid the world's vulnerable children (Assistance of Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act of 2005), and The Action Plan on Children in Adversity, which outlines three core outcomes to better the lives of international youth and provide youth an opportunity to thrive in life (USAID, 2013).

Through global efforts, research has been in progress over the past few decades and has been implemented to improve understanding of the complexity of the orphan crisis and better inform the public on the truth surrounding orphanages and residential homes. Current findings suggest that orphans are among the most vulnerable individuals in society and face many hardships as a result (Assistance of Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act of 2005). Without a choice of what circumstances into which they were born, the loss of caregivers due to death or the choice of the adult to abandon the child puts these children's current and future well-being at risk through experiences with a multitude of negative

factors including toxic stress, poor health, malnutrition, and lack of strong relationships with caregivers, decreased cognitive functioning, stunted growth, neglect, abuse, isolation, stigmatization, abandonment, and child labor (United States Government, 2012). The growing list of risk-factors impacting the orphaned youth on a daily basis calls for international attention and an urgency to evaluate and reform the child welfare systems in countries struggling with high populations of orphaned youth. It is necessary to address and solve the orphan crisis if children are going to have the opportunity to grow in a lifestyle that allows them to realize their potential and positively contribute to the economy. Currently there are too many risk factors hindering their growth process.

While the daunting reality of the orphan crisis may present as overwhelming due to its presence across multiple continents, addressing the crisis can become more feasible by focusing on a specific area and the unique needs of that area's orphaned youth to approach the crisis on a smaller scale. In Sub-Saharan Africa there are 43.4 million orphans (United Nations AIDS [UNAIDS], UNICEF, USAID, 2004). With a magnitude of obstacles impacting the daily lives of African orphans, over the past few decades the traditional system of caregiving occurring within the kin group has declined and orphans are being placed out of the family into institutions, including children's homes. Studies have found the primary reason for admittance into children's homes across the globe, and more specifically in Sub-Saharan Africa is due to poverty rather than parental death, which is often assumed by the international public (Save the Children, 2009). This finding is especially relevant to Ghana, a country in Sub-Saharan Africa that is challenged by a continually growing orphan population.

**Ghana**

Ghana is a country within Sub-Saharan Africa that is on the coast of West Africa between Cote d'Ivoire and Togo, stretching 238,533 square kilometers (Government of Ghana, 2013). Ghana formed through colonization by the British, who were attracted to its rich resources of slaves, gold, cocoa, timber, industrial diamonds, fish, rubber, and various other resources (Government of Ghana, 2013). Freeing itself from colonial rule, in 1957 Ghana became a historical model by becoming the first Sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from colonial rule, eventually evolving into a modern day constitutional democracy (Government of Ghana, 2013). Ghana has a climate varying from tropical and humid to hot and dry depending on the region within the country one resides and the current season (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2013). Ghana has a population of 25 million, many of which live in its capital, Accra (Government of Ghana, 2013). The country has a birth rate of 31.7 births per 1,000 individuals, and an infant mortality rate of 39.7 deaths per 1,000 individuals (CIA, 2013). The country has found success in having only a 1.8% HIV/AIDS prevalence rate (CIA, 2013), though work still needs to be done to eradicate even the low percent of the disease. Furthermore, Ghana is made of various ethnic groups, with the Akan composing the largest part of the population at 47.5% (CIA, 2013). Ghana's many ethnic groups formed the country's multitude of languages spoken such as Twi, Asante, Ewe, Fante, Ga and English, which serves as the official language (CIA, 2013). The predominant religious groups in Ghana are Christians and Muslims (Government of Ghana, 2013). Following Ghana's growth, in the last two decades the country has grown into stability through its democracy and the economy grew past the average for its region in Africa with a gross domestic product growth at 7.9% due to high production of resources (The World Bank, 2013). Despite Ghana's economic growth as a country, much of the population is suffering

extreme poverty with an alarming 28.5% of the country living below the poverty line (CIA, 2013).

Another troublesome statistic in Ghana is that children 18 or under constitute almost half of the population (National Population Council, 2004). Of those children, orphans constitute up to 12 percent of them (MESW & UNICEF, 2010). As a result of a population of vulnerable children needing cared for, the number of residential children's homes in Ghana has increased from less than five to almost 150 (Department of Social Welfare [DSW], 2011c). Rising numbers in orphans and children's homes to support these at-risk youth has led to country-wide and international attention on the need to confront the orphan spike across the country and re-evaluate the child welfare system operations of the DSW.

### **Background on Children's Homes in Ghana**

Traditionally in Ghana the crisis of orphanhood would not have been as magnified as it currently is because the orphans' strong extended family network, also known as their kin group, would care for the youth permanently or until the youth could reunite with their caretaker (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2012). Kinship is a series of relationships that unite a group of individuals who can depend on one another for mutual support (Takyi & Gyimah, 2007). Kinship fosterage across the country was the most common child welfare system to counteract children from becoming orphans (Colburn, 2010). Kinship care is a source of social capital and relationships that benefits both the biological and foster parents, usually occurring during a time of crisis (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2012). In Ghana and across most of Africa, kinship fostering derives from the belief in the value of children because they symbolize the legacy of their parents (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2012), and thus children must be adequately cared for and raised. This strong importance of the child led to involvement of extended family in raising a child to ensure proper

socialization and maturing (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2012). For Ghanaians, kinship fostering was vital to the child-rearing process. For example, in the Manya Krobo region of Ghana, Queen Mothers of their tribes created an initiative to care for orphaned and vulnerable children in their area (Deters, 2008). By taking in the orphaned youth in the Manya Krobo district, the Queen Mothers have provided a family-based care system for the youth, despite the child being separated from their parents due to death, abandonment, poverty or other reasons.

Though, kinship fostering has declined in recent decades because of urbanization. Ghana's economy improved and rural to urban migration was fueled by industrialization, forcing families to leave their supportive kin networks (Akpalu, 2007). When urbanization occurred, economic hardships arose due to reasons such as an increased demand for an educated population, which yielded more costs to parents with school fees (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2012). Ghana's families experienced difficulties caring for their children with little resources and a lack of support due to moving away from their extended families, thus increasing the orphan population when children could not be cared for by parents and a non-existent external kin support system. This decline in kinship fostering within Ghana has paralleled the immense growth of the orphan crisis over the past two decades.

During this urbanization period of hardships, breakdown of kin networks, and abandonment of children, the European missionaries residing in Ghana took notice. European's responded to the needy orphans by establishing the first children's homes in Ghana in 1949, which today still exists as Osu Children's Home (Deters, 2008). Eventually international aid agencies were made aware of the crisis by the Europeans, and foreign support was given to the children's homes to care for the youth (Deters, 2008), leading to the creation of over 148 children's homes across Ghana. Children's homes seemingly offer the proper care for youth and



a solution to mitigate the burden of the economic strain on caregivers who care for orphaned children.

### **Ecological Perspective in Ghana's Children's Homes**

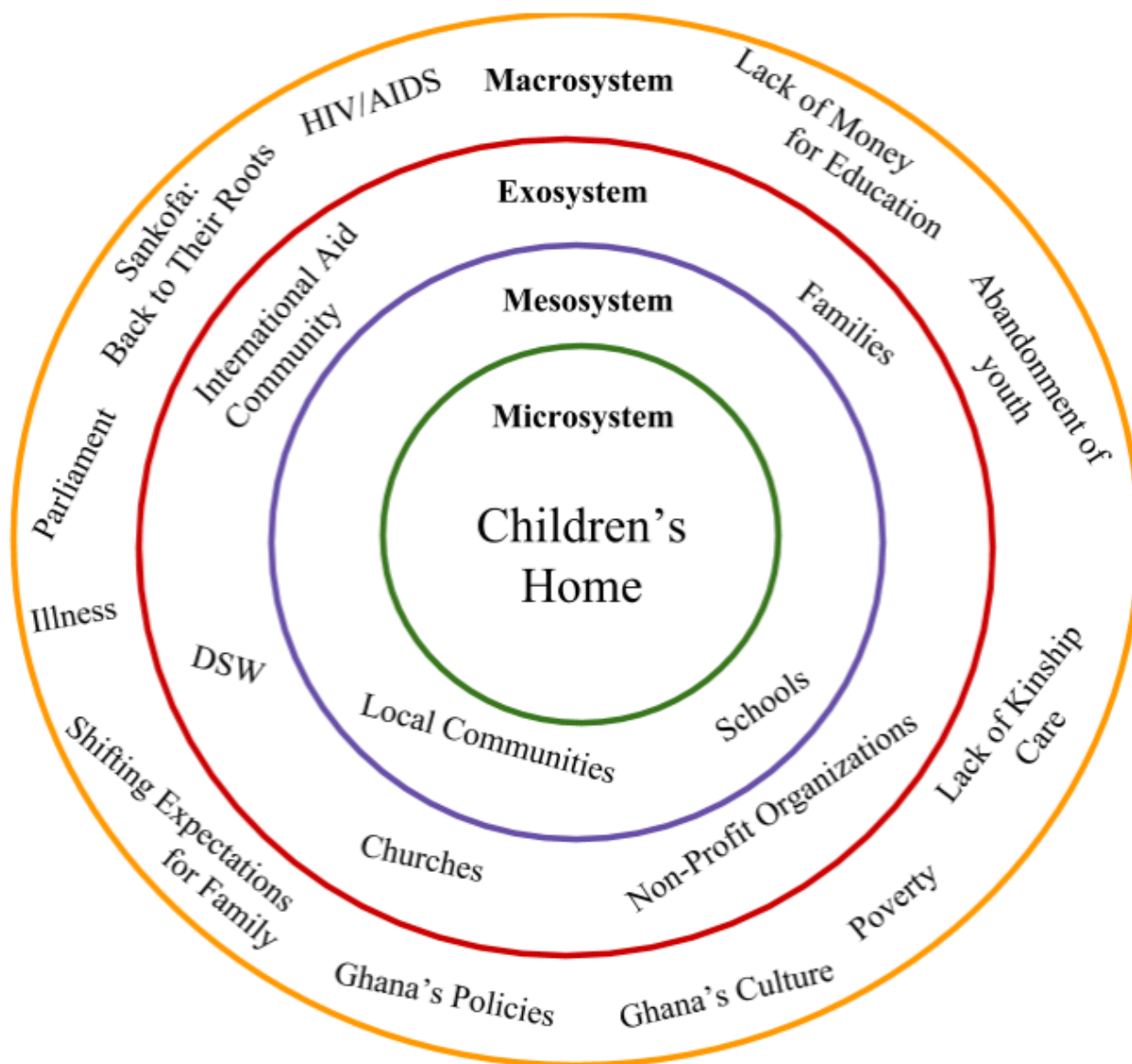
In this section of the paper, the researcher will discuss the theoretical framework used to guide this research study, the Ecological Perspective. The Ecological Perspective is the social work profession's theory that emphasizes the importance of living environments in understanding people (Ashford, LeCroy, & Lortie, 2006). The theory is concerned with the mutual influence of the interactions between humans and their environments, and how these interactions support the growth and development of human beings (Ashford, LeCroy, & Lortie, 2006). Social workers believe the interactions between people and environments best thrive when both components promote positive change and growth of organisms, which improves the living conditions for all systems within the environment (Ashford, LeCroy, & Lortie, 2006). The social work profession thus aims to improve the interactions between people and their environments to advance the capabilities of those functioning within the various environmental systems surrounding the client of focus.

Naturally, this theoretical framework suits this research study and gives a theoretical base for the researcher to begin answering questions of how the operations and environment of children's homes are influenced by the many layers of systems contributing to the children's homes ability to function and thrive. In utilizing the Ecological Perspective, the researcher will analyze if the systems interacting with Ghana's children's homes promote adequate growth and standards of living. The interviews with children's home staff members will guide the researcher in understanding what system interactions are benefitting or hindering the children's homes' operations and needs.

In order to utilize the Ecological Perspective, the researcher must understand the systems in which the theory is based. A system consists of any combination of elements that impact one another (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). When analyzing systems, the issues of one system cannot be properly solved without considering all elements influencing the system and its parts (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). In this theory, systems can be broken down into four main levels of systems including microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems (Ashford, LeCroy, & Lortie, 2006). The first system, microsystems, consists of in-person interactions and direct contact between system participants. In this study, the children's home represents the microsystem. The children's home microsystem encompasses children's home staff, the youth in the homes, and the operations and needs of the children's home. This system will be the primary system in focus for the researcher. The next level, mesosystems, is comprised of a network of environments in which the clients spend their lives (Ashford, LeCroy, & Lortie, 2006). In the context of this study, the mesosystem includes the local communities and schools surrounding the children's home. Providing a broader perspective, the system following mesosystems is the exosystems. The exosystems are made of larger institutions in society that influence the personal settings of the client (Ashford, LeCroy, & Lortie, 2006). These larger systems within the exosystems are systems in which the client is not directly involved, such as government agencies (Ashford, LeCroy, & Lortie, 2006). The exosystem in this research includes the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), the families of the youth in the children's home, churches, non-profit organizations, and the international aid community. Lastly, the final system is macrosystems, which consist of a broader cultural and subcultural perspective in which the microsystems, mesosystems, and exosystems exist. The macrosystem places an emphasis on culture, which includes values and meanings common to a population that are passed on to future generations

(Sigelman & Shaffer, 1995). In this study, the macrosystem deals with a variety of issues and agencies influencing the children's home. Thus, the researcher must consider the influences of parliament, illness, shifting family expectations, Ghana's policies, Ghana's culture, poverty, lack of kinship care, abandonment of youth, lack of money for education, HIV and AIDs, and the need to return to Ghana's roots and traditions. These considerations all serve as larger problems or institutions impacting the children's home. Altogether, the four systems differ in their makeup but they all provide context for understanding the effect of environments on the development of the children's home. By dividing the systems into smaller categories, the researcher gains a more informed understanding of how the multiple levels of systems influence the operations and needs of Ghana's children's home.

Overall, the researcher must identify the components included within each of the four system categories and the effects of the system interactions on the growth of Ghana's children's homes. When the researcher analyzes the children's home ability to function within the systems context, she can discuss operational challenges and successes, as well as suggest improvements for Ghana's children's homes to better serve orphaned youth.

**Figure 2: Ecological Perspective for Children's Home**

**Current Circumstances of Ghana's Children's Homes**

Initially, the addition of a few children's homes in Ghana under the supervision of the DSW in the mid 1950's seemed plausible to aid youth without able or willing caretakers until family placements were secured. Yet, when the five homes under the DSW's governance grew to almost 150 homes, most of which are not registered or legally sanctioned by the DSW to operate, the care of orphans grew out of control of the DSW's capacity. Across the world and in Ghana, research findings have shown many injustices in the standards of care for the orphans in children's homes, which are related to the DSW's inability to properly oversee the children's homes in the country.

To first understand why the quality of life for orphans institutionalized in Ghana can be poor, it is vital to know that the majority of children's homes operate without any government oversight or financial assistance (Voyk, 2010). The low presence of government administration in the children's homes stems from most of Ghana's children's homes being privately run by founder such as individuals or local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Freidus, 2010). Due to a high presence of private operations among Ghana's children's homes, the majority of them are funded by outside donors (MESW, 2010) who are not accountable to anyone on how their homes operate (Freidus, 2010). In Ghana, the cities of Kumasi, Osu, Tamale, Jirapa, and Mampong are considered the only official and legally approved children's home sites by the DSW (DSW, Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment, & Government of Ghana, 2008). Without a governing system for the children's homes, many private homes continue operating without any official standards of care and the childcare system lacks consistency in the protection of children. Colburn found that the founders and staff of children's homes in Ghana had no relationships with other children's homes and no connection with the

DSW except for an initial visit to the site one time (2010). Consequently, after investigation into this growing issue, the DSW has found that the majority of children's homes across Ghana do not reach the minimum national and international guidelines and standards to which they must operate as children's homes (DSW et al., 2008). Without accountability to the DSW, these institutions place the vulnerable children they serve at risk of human rights violations.

Research into the operations of the various children's homes across Ghana has shown the lack of government registration, and thus lack of accountability, has led to a variety of problems for children's homes. Without governmental support, most children's homes lack steady income sources, resulting in financial issues causing a lack of resources, care, and space for the children (DSW, 2011c). Only five homes having governmental support means the majority of children's homes are reliant on external donors, which have been found to be unsustainable and inefficient (Deters, 2008). These financial deficits can create stressful living conditions for staff and children in the home, which eventually evolve into human rights violations. The DSW found current violations in many overcrowded children's homes including insufficient bedding, living space, food, medical supplies, educational opportunities, and vocational opportunities (DSW, 2011c). Furthermore, studies of Ghana's children's homes revealed that institutions do not address the mental well-being of the youth or address potential traumas of family separation or parental loss (Voyk, 2011); the homes are overcrowded and cannot provide housing for the orphans in the only 148 homes available (Colburn, 2010), and the homes do not provide resources for youth transitioning into adulthood who leave the home (Colburn, 2010). Furthermore, the DSW has identified other problem areas occurring in homes as limited contact with family, disregard for privacy rights, inappropriate care for disabled children, child labor, low staff to child ratios, and too few venues for children to play (DSW, 2011c). Children's

homes may begin with good intentions of helping orphaned and vulnerable children as expressed in the interviews conducted by Colburn in Ghana (2010); but the reality of overcrowding in children's homes has turned into risky living conditions for the youth served. While not every issue is present in each children's home identified across the country, the noted problems have been found to be significant enough to warrant a need for countrywide change in relation to how the DSW oversees children's homes.

In addition to the various problems discovered related to the living conditions of the children's homes, the DSW researched statistics concerning caregivers of the homes. The DSW found that 45% of the caregivers in the children's homes have no history of an education and 46% have only a basic education (MESW, 2010), leaving only 9% of caretakers with proper degree qualifications. This finding was supported by Colburn in her studies of orphanages in Accra that yielded that workers were not qualified to run the children's homes and only government run homes had some staff with appropriate degrees (2010). The lack of education in caregivers can be of concern when children need assistance in advancing their skills and dealing with mental traumas or stress. Furthermore, for those with or without a degree, there are many personnel without professional training to properly equip them with childcare qualifications (Colburn, 2010). Consequently, most staff of children's homes are simply motivated out of compassion and interest and have no social work or social science related background (Baffoe & Dako-Gyeke, 2013). When considering human rights violations, the lack of professional staff in the children's homes would serve as a concern to the current operations of children's homes, and another reason why it is vital to increase the DSW's involvement with the various homes. It is critical to ensure qualified staff members are overseeing the operations of homes and that they are operating in the best interest of the orphans.

Another major element of children's homes that concerns the international community is isolation of children affiliated with children's homes from the rest of their community. Ghana's children's homes have found the socialization of their youth with outside children to be almost non-existent, and often the youth are ostracized and stigmatized instead of befriended (DSW, 2011c). For the many youth cared for in children's homes, findings suggest that the culture of these homes has led to a disconnect of interaction with the community outside of the individuals belonging to and working for the homes. This is problematic because separation from the surrounding locals depletes social networks and a sense of community (DSW, 2011c), which can lead to a loss of identity and belonging concerning family and kin groups (UNAIDS, UNICEF, & USAID, 2004). Having links to one's kin is especially important given the value placed on kinship in Ghana. Thus, isolation can create many future networking issues for orphans. Youth may find companionship among their peers in the children's homes, but residential care can create challenges in the future when the individuals leave the home and seek jobs in the workforce (Save the Children, 2009).

Another negative aspect of isolation due to children's home membership is stigmatization from the public (DSW, 2011c). Statistics show that 1 in 3 members of the community stigmatize orphaned and vulnerable children (MESW, 2010). When these children are stigmatized and labeled as different from those in the surrounding communities, it can stunt the social development at an early age and lead to the youth not contributing as greatly to society in later years. It has been found the longer a youth resides in a children's home, the more isolated they become from their community supports (Thurman, Boris, Kalisa, Nyirazinyoye, & Brown 2008).

With the many concerns arising in the area of children's homes in Ghana, the government of Ghana and international organizations, such as Save the Children, UNICEF, and OrphanAid



Africa have committed to reforming the care system with the hopes of directing efforts and funding towards family empowerment programs instead of the growing numbers of children's homes (DSW, 2011c). The current situations surrounding children's homes that have surfaced through investigations of the DSW and the re-evaluation of Ghana's care of children began after the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (MESW, 2010). The United Nations defines a child as "every human being below the age of eighteen years" (UN General Assembly, 1989) and sets out a wide range of rights for children. The charter emphasizes the responsibility of the community and family for the children as well as the value of family being the natural basis of communities and society (UN General Assembly, 1989). A few important rights of a child laid out by the CRC are the right to protection from sexual and physical abuse, the right to protection for a child without a family, and the right to health services and education (MESW, 2010). In addition to countries world-wide, Ghana has used this as a base to set up its own initiatives for reform.

In conclusion, there are a range of injustices committed against orphans in placing and keeping them in what has become overcrowded children's home that do not have adequate resources to properly care for the youth, and therefore it is critical that the international community and the country of Ghana collaborate to address the continually growing orphan population. To properly approach child welfare reforms in Ghana, Ghana's government must first educate the international community on the demographics of the youth in children's homes to understand the importance of reducing the number of youth in children's homes. Currently there is a misconception that all youth in Ghana's children's homes have no surviving parents (Save the Children, 2009), when in actuality 13.1 percent of Ghanaian children have both parents alive but are not living in their homes (MESW, 2010). An analysis of children's homes has

shown that over 90 percent of the youth in these institutions have one or more parents living (Save the Children, 2009). The formal name of the homes are children's homes but often foreigners involved in aiding the homes improperly call them orphanages due to the misconception that the children's homes serve mainly orphans. Thus, calling the children in these homes orphans is incorrect according to Ghana's definition of an orphan being a youth with no surviving parents (DSW et al., 2008). As a result of this misconception, the DSW has expressed their desire for the homes to be termed children's homes, as they serve vulnerable and needy children including but not limited to orphans (DSW et al., 2008). The DSW emphasizes proper terminology of these residential homes to educate the international public that the children in these homes have relatives with whom they can potentially be reunited, and with this knowledge, the global community can begin focusing efforts on family empowerment instead of sustaining numerous orphanages with children who could be transitioned into more permanent homes. In addition, the DSW is working to increase strictness in the criteria for admissions into a children's home to reduce the number of youth with surviving parents from entering unnecessarily.

### **Ghana's Response to the Orphan Crisis**

In the past decade, the DSW has recognized that only 5 of the estimated 148 children's homes are under their supervision, and thus has expressed the need to analyze their current child welfare system and better organize their department to reach the capacity to govern and supervise all children's homes in Ghana (MESW & UNICEF, 2010). To fulfill this mission of improving the lives of orphans throughout the country, the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare (MESW) delegated the DSW to head the National Plan of Action (NPA), a 3-year legislative plan that began in 2010 to develop protection of Ghanaian orphans and vulnerable

children (OVC) (MESW, 2010). The NPA is comprised of three goals focusing on prevention to keep OVC children with their families through family support and empowerment programs, protection of children by social workers through family reunification, and transformation of orphans' poor quality of lives into lives of opportunity to grow and positively contribute to society (MESW, 2010). Thus far, the NPA has been most successful in creating the Care Reform Initiative (CRI) in 2010.

The CRI serves as Ghana's strategic plan to lower dependence on care systems such as children's homes for vulnerable children and move towards community and family based services to care for Ghanaian children lacking appropriate caregivers (DSW, 2011b). The CRI aims at a holistic approach to reforming Ghana's care system containing four main goals focusing on prevention, kinship care, fostering, and adoption (DSW, 2011b). The CRI's enactment occurring four years ago has given the DSW the opportunity to take actions to fulfill the goals of the initiative, and some positive changes have occurred. Thus far, over one hundred residential homeowners attended a DSW child rights training, data collection in every children's homes began, legislation has been created, and social workers have been trained on the importance of de-institutionalization of OVC out of children's homes and back into families (DSW, 2011c). Secondly, work has been done to formulate foster care regulations and standards for residential care (DSW, 2011b). Lastly, a database has been in progress to track all orphans and vulnerable children with the aid of UNICEF (DSW, 2011b). The work of the government up to the present has led to the closing of 14 children's homes with more to be closed in the future as part of the DSW's goal to re-integrate children into their families and communities (DSW, 2011b).

To ensure the success of kinship care, the DSW wants to support the families through care packages, which will allow families to sustain themselves (DSW, 2011b). For the government-approved children's homes that will still remain during reforms, the CRI hopes to use the homes as models for the future homes established concerning regulations and treatment (DSW, 2011b). One way in which the DSW has made progress with shaping the regulations of the approved homes that will remain children's homes is through the release of the "Regulations for Care and Protection of Children without Appropriate Parental Care in Ghana". This document was created with the help of OrphanAid Africa, Save the Children, and the government of Ghana, and specifies the detailed guidelines that each children's home must meet in order to be certified and legal to operate. It was created based on a variety of documents outlining residential care from other countries such as the United Kingdom and Ethiopia, and also from child rights documents from global organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children (DSW et al., 2008). Included in the document is a sample care plan to show how they would follow the case of each child in collaboration with the children's homes and what they would evaluate and work on to ensure a transition out for the unique case of each youth.

With a large undertaking embraced by the CRI for Ghana's childcare systems, the process will continue to take years to fulfill. While Ghana wants to rid itself from most children's homes, there are many homes still in operation that they can advise on improving home standards until the country is able to focus mainly on kinship care (DSW, 2011a). The DSW suggests that children's homes look into transforming from permanent housing to a temporary foster system for children (DSW, 2011a). This would require the homes to acquire demographics on each child to see which children have suitable relatives with whom they can reunite. Additionally, homes are encouraged to limit the numbers of children in the home so the

staff can properly care for them (DSW, 2011a). These measures would allow for a decrease in overcrowding and proper attention to the needs of the youth in each children's home. It is vital for homes, whether public or private, to understand the direction in which the DSW is leading its child care systems and for each children's home to begin collaborating with the DSW to improve their living conditions and standards of care. If the homes are willing to partner with the DSW, a smoother transition will occur for the homes and ultimately the children who are the focus and common goal shared between all parties involved in the caring of these orphaned and vulnerable children will have the opportunity to thrive and not merely survive.

### **Summary of Chapter Two**

In this chapter, the researcher discussed to impact of the global orphan crisis with a focus on its implications in Ghana, West Africa. The researcher provided a background on Ghana including its geography, climate, history, economy, and people. The researcher conducted a literature review explaining the current research on Ghana's orphan crisis and the ramifications of the growth of institutionalized youth in Ghana. Additionally, the researcher detailed the theoretical framework guiding this study, the Ecological Perspective and how it is relevant to the research on Ghana's children's homes. Last, the researcher described Ghana's response to the increase in orphans in Ghana's children's homes in recent decades.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher will describe the study and provide details about the research design, study participants, sampling procedure, measurement/instrumentation, and data analysis. The data were collected qualitatively through semi-structured interviews with staff members of the children's homes. The study participants were individuals working in four children's homes across Ghana who identified as staff members being at least 18 years of age. They all consented verbally to participating in the research study. Interviewees were queried on their perceptions of the daily operations and basic needs of the children's home. The survey was administered in English by the researcher and data analysis occurred by utilizing line-by-line analysis methods to interpret data from the transcribed interviews. To ensure trustworthiness in this research study, the researcher adhered to principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

#### **Research Design**

The data were collected using a qualitative design. Specifically, semi-structured interviews were used to investigate the operations of children's homes through interviews with staff members of the homes.

#### *Study Participants*

The research participants included children's home staff members working for Bethel Academy in Achiase, Ghana in the Central Region; Bright Future in Somanya, Ghana in the Eastern Region; West African Children's Foundation in Kasoa, Ghana in the Central Region; and Grace Masak in Kasoa, Ghana in the Central Region. A children's home staff member is an

individual who is affiliated with holding a position that contributed to the operations of the children's home and who self-identified as 18 years of age or above. The participants were recruited using a convenience sample, which was rooted in the researcher's previous contact with children's home staff in Ghana. The convenience sample was utilized to aid in gaining consent from children's home owners for participation of their children's homes in this study. Twenty-five individuals participated in the study. Given that qualitative studies traditionally require small number of participants, the amount of participants secured for this research study was adequate.



(Figure 1: Map of Ghana)

(<http://www.turkeyvisit.com/map/ghana/map-ghana.gif>)

*Sampling Procedure*

Children's home staff members were surveyed in their respective homes: Bethel Academy, Bright Future, West African Children's Foundation, and Grace Masak. The researcher traveled to the four locations of each home and sought participants. Traveling to each location to directly converse with each participant was the most practical method to recruit participants. Participants who self-identified as staff members at each home and were 18 years of age or above were asked to participate in the study. Each participant was given 5 GHC, which is comparable to \$2.97 USD. Interviews took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete.

*Measurement/Instrumentation*

Staff members of the homes were administered a survey in English by the researcher. (Please refer to Appendix 2: Instrument). The researcher investigated the funding of the children's homes, the daily duties of the staff members, the interactions with the surrounding community, the daily schedule of the children, and the resources available to the home and children.

*Consent*

Since 46% of children's home staff only received up to a primary school education, some were not be able to read and write in English. Additionally, cultural norms dissuaded the use of signing documents when interacting with foreigners and researchers. Therefore, consent was acquired through the individuals' verbal agreement to participate in the study. No signatures were requested for consent or any other purpose.



*Research Questions*

In an attempt to explore the operations of children's homes in Achiase, Somanya, and Kasoa, the researcher proposed the following research questions. They were as follows:

1. What are the staff's perceptions of the daily operations of children's homes in Ghana?
2. What are the staff's perceptions of the basic needs of the homes in Ghana?

In this research study, the researcher focused on the two main research questions to guide the creation of the instrument used during interviews. The first major question, "What are the staff's perceptions of the daily operations of children's homes in Ghana?", guided questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, and 14 (Please refer to Appendix 2: Instrument). These questions focused on the operations of the children's homes. The second major question, "What are the staff's perceptions of the basic needs of the homes in Ghana?", guided questions 1, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 (Please refer to Appendix 2: Instrument). These questions were structured in a manner that would provide the researcher with information regarding the needs of children's homes in Ghana. The last question on the interview instrument, question 20, asked "Is there anything else that I did not cover that you would like to share or think I should know?". This question does not fit either principal research question but was used as a follow up question to ensure any thoughts from participants not expressed at this point or needing expanded upon would be captured.

*Data Analysis*

Data were gathered through interviews. The researcher took thorough notes during each interview and then transcribed the participant's responses into an excel file. Once data were gathered from the 23 interviews, analysis was implemented by two researchers to explore the recurring themes across participants. The researchers implemented line-by-line data analysis to

seek common trends and conclude overall themes across interviews. The methods used for data analysis was a line-by-line strategy, in which those analyzing data read every word and every line of each response to all questions in the interview instrument to find common trends across interviews. After completing data analysis, the researchers compared results to ensure both researchers' findings aligned with one another. To ensure confidentiality of the study participants, the researcher assigned an alias name to each participant's interview in order to use verbatim quotes when discussing research findings and themes.

### **Ensuring Trustworthiness of Findings**

#### *Credibility*

Credibility refers to whether or not the findings of the research study align with what actually happens in the environment (Pitney, 2004). To establish credibility, the researcher implemented the data triangulation strategy in her research study by ensuring data was collected from multiple sources (Pyrzczak, 2005). To use data triangulation, the researcher interviewed a variety of children's home staff members within each site and at four sites total. Moreover, the researcher established credibility by using another researcher to analyze the data and results to ensure the results were reasonably concluded. Lastly, the researcher used already existing literature on children's homes in Ghana to compare results, and the researcher found many instances of similar findings across existing research and the results of this study. For example, the findings in this study connect with previous research suggesting that children's homes in Ghana lack sustainable funding, which causes potentially dangerous living conditions for youth such as inadequate housing (Deters, 2008). This study also aligns with previous findings by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) that outline issues among the children's homes in Ghana; inadequate access to food, medical supplies, and educational opportunities (2011c). Finally,

Deter's research on Ghana's children's homes (2008) supports the research findings of this study suggesting that children's homes in Ghana lack money and therefore are dependent on external donors.

### *Transferability*

Transferability is the aspect of research that relates to the extent to which qualitative research results can be generalized to other contexts or settings outside of the interviewed sites (Pitney, 2004). In this research study, the results are applicable to other contexts outside of the four children's home sites because children's homes in Ghana are similarly situated. The overall operations and situations faced across Ghana's children's homes are similar despite variation in size and location.

### *Dependability*

Dependability refers to the ability to observe consistent findings under similar conditions (Pitney, 2004). In this research study the researcher utilized multiple ways to use the same research protocol across interviews. In each interview the researcher used the same verbal script to describe the research study's purpose and procedure and ask for verbal consent from the participants. Additionally the researcher used the same instrument to conduct each interview, asking the questions in the same order. It is important to note that the questions were open-ended, and thus each participant had the freedom to choose the length of time he or she wanted to respond to each question. Last, the researcher asked the staff of the children's home to find a quiet place away from others in the children's home to ensure a quiet and open environment was created for each interview.

*Conformability*

Conformability in research refers to the degree that the research study results could be confirmed by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher acknowledges that she has natural human biases, but she conducted her research in a manner that ensured as much objectivity as possible through following standardized methods in her qualitative study. The researcher collaborated with her principal investigator of the research study to implement methodical approaches in collecting data, creating research questions, and structuring interview questions to ensure neutrality in wording [Please see Appendix 2 for this instrument]. Furthermore, during data collection, the researcher structured her methods to foster interpretive validity, which is the extent to which the researcher understands the study subjects' perspectives, experiences, and intentions (Pyrzczak, 2005). The researcher used a low inference descriptor for the researcher to experience and portray the study participants' intended language and meanings (Pyrzczak, 2005) as a method of limiting biases in interviews. The low inference descriptor used was verbatims, also called direct quotations, by using the exact words of the participants' responses to the interview questions of this study (Pyrzczak, 2005). During the interviews, the researcher wrote the responses of the participants verbatim to acquire validity within her study. During data analysis, the researcher conducted data analysis multiple times to ensure results were consistent across all attempts. Lastly, two researchers conducted line-by-line data analysis to provide another opportunity for result comparison to ensure the findings were credible.

**Summary of Chapter Three**

In this chapter the researcher discussed this study's methods of qualitative research. The researcher discussed the study participants, the research sampling procedure, the measurements and instrumentation used, methods of obtaining consent, methods of analysis, the main research questions, and methods for ensuring trustworthiness in the research study through credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the two main research questions and the emergent themes that arose in this study. After careful data analysis, the researcher discovered 10 major themes for the two principal research questions: five themes emerged for the question related to the operations of the children's homes in Ghana and five themes emerged related to the question on needs of children's homes in Ghana. Examining the responses focused on the operations of children's homes in Ghana, themes arose that related to a lack of funding, education, food, health care, and a sense of familiness. Under the second main research question concerning needs of children's homes in Ghana, five themes arose that related to inadequate housing, health care, food and water, education, and money. The researcher will now discuss each theme and provide quotes from the interviews supporting the themes.

#### **Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants**

This section presents a table of demographic information of the 23 study participants. All of the participants in this study were individuals who identified as children's home staff 18 years of age or older. Every participant in the study identified between the ages 18 and 56. Approximately 44% of the participants were under the age of 21. The demographics showed that the majority of participants reported being from Europe (30.4%), the United States (26.1%), and Ghana (21.7%). The participants identified with nine different positions at the home, and of these 52.2% identified as temporary staff and 30.4% identified as a volunteer. Concerning the participants' salaries, 95.7% of participants identified as having no salary (0 Cedi), and one

identified as being paid 200 Cedi per month. Furthermore, approximately 74% of participants reported working at the home less than one year, and the rest had at least one year of experience.

Considering education levels of children's home staff in this study, the education levels varied. There were 43.5% of study subjects who are currently attending a university for a bachelor's degree or have completed this degree, and 34.8% have completed up to high school. Examining those who have attended a university, 4.3% specialized in social work, 21.7% studied social sciences, 17.4% focused on biological sciences, and the rest were other specializations.

**Table 1: Demographics of Participants (n=23)**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Age</b>		
18-20	10	43.5
21-23	6	26.1
24+	7	<u>30.4</u>
		100
<b>Country of Origin</b>		
United States of America	6	26.1
Ghana	5	21.7
Europe	7	30.4
Other	5	<u>21.7</u>
		100
<b>Children's Home Position</b>		
temporary staff	12	52.2
caretaker	1	4.3
volunteer	7	30.4
childcare	3	13.0
founder	3	13.0
mother	2	8.7
father	1	4.3
math teacher	1	<u>4.3</u>
		100
<b>Time Spent Working at Children's Home</b>		
< 1 Year	17	73.9
1-2 Years	2	8.7
3-4 Years	3	13.0
5+ Years	1	<u>4.3</u>
		100
<b>Education Level</b>		
Junior High School	1	4.3
Senior High School	8	34.8
College/University Bachelor's	10	43.5
College/University Master's	2	8.7
Technical School	1	4.3
Other	1	<u>4.3</u>
		100



<b>University Specialization</b>		
Social Work	1	4.3
Social Sciences	5	21.7
Biological Sciences	4	17.4
Other	13	<u>56.5</u>
		100

**Table 2: Main Research Questions Themes**

<b>Research Question 1</b>	<b>Research Question 2</b>
<b>Theme 1: Lack of Funding</b>	<b>Theme 1: Inadequate Housing</b>
<b>Theme 2: Education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-theme 1: Education Quality</li> <li>• Sub-theme 2: Education Access</li> </ul>	<b>Theme 2: Health Care</b>
<b>Theme 3: Food</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-theme 1: Kids Gain Access to 3 Meals a Day</li> <li>• Sub-theme 2: Lack of Food to Feed the Kids at Times</li> <li>• Sub-theme 3: Challenges in Preparing Meals</li> </ul>	<b>Theme 3: Food and Water</b>
<b>Theme 4: Health Care</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-theme 1: Lack of Medicine and Supplies</li> <li>• Sub-theme 2: Malaria and Other Illnesses</li> </ul>	<b>Theme 4: Education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-theme 1: School Fees</li> <li>• Sub-theme 2: Better Educational Environments</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 5: A Sense of Familiness</b>	<b>Theme 5: Money</b>

**Themes of Research Question 1: Operations of Children's in Ghana**

In this section of the paper the author will discuss each of the five themes that arose related to research question one. Research question one asked "What are the staff's perceptions of the daily operations of children's homes in Ghana?". In this research question, five themes arose including a lack of funding, education, food, health care, and a sense of familiness. Furthermore, sub-themes presented within a few of the themes. Under the theme education, two sub-themes arose including quality of education and access to education. The Food theme presented three sub-themes including the kids gain access to three meals a day, a lack of food to feed the kids at times, and challenges in preparing meals. Lastly, the theme of health care consisted of two sub-themes including a lack of medicine and supplies, and malaria and other illnesses.

**Theme 1: Lack of Funding**

A lack of funding served as the first primary theme under research question one. Approximately 83% of respondents mentioned this issue. A lack of funding presented as an issue within Ghana's children's homes in relation to the homes' inability to create sustainable income sources or to fund the basic needs of the youth. Hence, an issue reported was the children's homes' dependence on donations to meet basic needs and implement projects. The following are excerpts from interviews supporting this theme.

**Jane:** "Monetary, funding. If not for volunteers there would not be money. Income [comes] only through the school fees of outside students [at the children's home school]."

**Helen:** "funding for medicines, food, water, and other needs"

**Charity:** "With no regular income the home faces the challenge of feeding all the children, paying school fees for older children, paying for health care and paying bills."

**Jennifer:** “If volunteers are not here the home relies on donations.”

**Jodie:** “Money. Where to put money because [the home] lacks it everywhere.”

**James:** “money for all of the kids - they ran out and no volunteers were there to help.”

**Tracy:** “sustainable income, [there’s] none...lack of income aside from volunteer donations and occasional church donations...”

**Emma:** “We fundraised prior to coming to the home therefore had money to spend on the beautiful home. I have been to the home on two separate occasion and collectively we built a classroom for the school building...bought a 7000L water tank...ensured all health insurance cards were up to date...installed fans in all the bedrooms...painted the original school building...built a cooking shelter...installed a new cement clothesline...paid for national registration of the orphanage and school building, bought textbooks, calculators, pens, and pencils...paid for teacher’s wages in the months we were there, bought cocoa beans and maize to plant at their farm, and [made] regular grocery trips.”

**Sarah:** “In the summer 2013, the volunteers raised money to buy all the kids health insurance, a 1000 gallon poly tank so they will not run out of water, goats and a goat pen to provide income for the home, and a cooking shelter so the kids can cook their meals even when the weather is bad. There is also a health fund and an orphanage food fund that I and other volunteers donated to.”

## **Theme 2: Education**

The second theme, Education, arose in 95.7% of responses to research question one. Among the interview responses, two sub-themes arose in this category. Sub-theme one was quality of education and sub-theme two was education access.

### **Sub-theme 1: Education Quality**

For sub-theme one, participants discussed an inadequate quality of education received by the children's home youth because of an inability to pay teacher's wages, teachers being unreliable or relaxed in methods, and the schools being inadequate structures for learning. The following are excerpts from interviews supporting this theme.

**Ruth:** "The [founders] also struggle to pay the teacher's wages each month..."

**Grace:** "Relaxed - a lot [of children] play while at school and teachers try but they give up."

**James:** "Older go to governmental school...younger go to primary [school] - not government aided [and] teachers unreliable."

**Sarah:** "The other kids attend a senior high school, but most of the kids attend the school that is owned by the home. The school building is just simple wood sticks with a cover and the kids do not have many school books or supplies."

### **Sub-theme 2: Education Access**

When discussing sub-theme two, education access, the interviews shared an inability to access education or a proper education in children's homes in Ghana due to school fees. It was clear through conversations with interview participants that the children's homes want to send the children to quality schools and allow them to progress to higher levels of education, though it seems as if children's home funding is at times not enough to pay the fees to give the youth access to education. It also arose in participants' responses that the children's homes in Ghana

are filled with youth willing and excited to learn. The following are excerpts from interviews supporting this theme and the children's homes' aims of educating the youth.

**Charity:** "With no regular income the home faces the challenge of...paying school fees for older children..."

**Jennifer:** "older children pay SHS and JHS fees, younger don't pay at orphanage's school."

**Jane:** "value school and education, created school next door, all kids attend [school], high emphasis [on education] and if can't afford school approach donors for senior high school fees."

**Ruth:** "the [founders] also provide this education at the school they own for 100 children in the area...the [founders] provide an environment where each child is encouraged to be whatever they want to be and aim high."

**Sarah:** "The best kids ever! The kids are very well behaved and independent. The kids love to attend school and love to learn and read."

**Ruth:** "in the morning we would sit on school classes or tutor individual children behind in school who require extra help....in the afternoon we would help with homework....after dinner we would run tutor groups, a volunteer initiative..."

**Linda:** "[the children] need education, without it there would be suffering. Education leads to a good life."

**Charity:** "As the owners of the home also run a Primary school all children must go to school.

The owner of the home did not have the opportunity to go to school himself he understands how this has affected his life opportunities and therefore understands the importance of education.

Children are encouraged to work hard at school and to work towards going to senior high school and university."

**Ruth:** “[the founders] believe education is most definitely the main thing that is going to provide the children with a bright future. School is compulsory except when they are sick.”

**Sarah:** “When the kids get home from school, volunteers make sure they are doing their homework and help them with homework. Volunteers also read to the kids/have the kids read to them.”

### **Theme 3: Food**

Nearly 65% of study participants discussed the theme of food pertaining to research question one. Under the theme of food emerged three sub-themes, which included kids gain access to three meals a day, lack of food to feed the kids at times, and challenges in preparing meals.

#### **Sub-theme 1: Kids Gain Access to Three Meals**

Sub-theme one arose as a success of the children's homes in Ghana in terms of their operations. Based on interview responses, the children's homes in Ghana provide food for the youth, though it is not always enough to meet basic needs. The following are portions of interviews from study participants supporting this theme.

**Charity:** “The home cares for over 40 children, providing them with a place to sleep, food and an education. Although each of these things could be improved the children would not receive this out with the home therefore this is a great achievement.”

**Sarah:** “The home makes sure that the kids attend school, have clothes and shoes, and food to eat.”

**Helen:** “while the kids don't necessarily have ideal care, they do have shelter, food, and water which they wouldn't get if they were alone.”

**Sandra:** “feeding 3 meals a day”

**Theresa:** “making the kids healthier, good diet, ...”

### **Sub-theme 2: Lack of Food to Feed the kids at Times**

When conversing about the operations of children's homes in Ghana, a lack of food to feed the kids at times emerged as a sub-theme under food. Study participants shared that with large numbers of children being served at the children's homes, a lack of funding does not always allow for proper nutritional meals to be served to the youth or a full three meals a day. The following are excerpts from interviews supporting this theme.

**Emma:** “Feeding the large family of 38 children on a minimal budget- therefore there is an extreme lack of fruit, vegetables and any source of meat or chicken. There are also multiple mornings the children do without breakfast.”

**Sarah:** During the months when the home doesn't get volunteers, the kids may only get one meal a day.”

**Charity:** “With no regular income the home faces the challenge of feeding all the children...”

**Ruth:** “the home struggles to provide three meals a day for the children let alone a nutritious diet comprising of some meat (chicken) and fruits and vegetables.”

### **Sub-theme 3: Challenges in Preparing Meals**

The last sub-theme under food related to challenges in preparing meals. The interview participants shared that the operations of the children's homes can become problematic when cooking meals because of the low number in staff to cook for the many children in the homes and for the school children in attendance at schools run by the children's homes. Additionally, the children's homes in Ghana were reported to have issues preparing meals due to a lack of kitchens in which to cook the food during the rainy season. If the homes do not have adequate

shelter, they reported difficulty in preparing meals. Below are quotes from interview respondents discussing sub-theme three.

**Grace:** "...no kitchen at first...if raining so no food all day until night."

**Emma:** "built a cooking shelter. This has allowed [the mother of the home] to easily cook over the fire in the rainy season"

**Sarah:** "a cooking shelter so the kids can cook their meals even when the weather is bad. There is also a health fund and an orphanage food fund that I and other volunteers donated to."

**Ruth:** "in the morning we would help [the mother of the home] prepare the children's breakfast....we would also help [the mother of the home] prepare the hot lunch she provided for not only the orphanage kids but the entire school...and help [the mother of the home] prepare dinner."

**Theresa:** "prepare breakfast for the home...lunch - prepare lunch for kids at home and school orphanage runs."

#### **Theme 4: Health Care**

Approximately 65.2% of study participants discussed health care in questions regarding research question one. Under the theme of health care arose two sub-themes including a lack of medicine and supplies, and malaria and other illnesses.

##### **Sub-theme 1: Lack of Medicine and Supplies**

The study's interviews discussed operational challenges in acquiring medicines and supplies due to inadequate funding and access. Based on interview responses, the access to medicine and supplies were reported to come predominantly from volunteers and donations. The following are portions of interviews in relation to this sub-theme.

**Helen:** "funding for medicines, food, water, and other needs."



**Charity:** “With no regular income the home faces the challenge of...paying for health care...”

**Ama:** “health and bills.”

**Ruth:** “...We would also organize medical supplies, take sick children to the clinic and hospital, repair mosquito nets and complete projects”

**James:** “help with medical care - clinic, treat wounds.”

**Emma:** “...bought a 7000L water tank. Occasionally the water pipe to the entire town will get turned off. In such instances the large water tank has provided with easy access to water. The children no longer need to haul water from the well or get it from the dirty local stream. Ensured all health insurance cards were up to date. This allows for all trips to the clinic or hospital to be free...”

**Helen:** “I brought some donations that were mainly medical supplies and toys....”

**Sarah:** “the volunteers raised money to buy all the kids health insurance, a 1000 gallon poly tank so they will not run out of water....There is also a health fund.”

## **Sub-theme 2: Malaria and Other Illnesses**

Within the theme of health care, the children's homes in Ghana were reported by study participants to have operational challenges in relation to the onset of illnesses such as malaria, leading to the creation of sub-theme two. The following are excerpts from interviews supporting this theme.

**Sarah:** “The kids get malaria because they don't have mosquito nets and they don't use the ones they do have.”

**Sarah:** “Volunteers....also provide bandages and medicine when necessary....If any of the kids are sick, volunteers will take them to the clinic in.”

**Michael:** “sickness - malaria.”

**George:** “sickness- malaria, ringworm, and rashes.”

**Charity:** “There is almost always one child who is sick or need some kind of medical care.”

**Jennifer:** “helping the sick and wounded.”

**Hope:** “clinic pays - four kids with malaria...”

### **Theme 5: A Sense of Familiness**

Concerning the last theme, a sense of familiness, 87.0% of respondents discussed this theme in regards to research question one. Responses from study participants shared that children's homes in Ghana are successful in providing a family environment for the youth in their homes, the youth are happy, the staff care for and love the children, and the home gives support to the youth. Below are excerpts from interviews discussing this theme.

**Jane:** “sense of family, home - kids call it home.”

**Emma:** “all children are cared for and loved...”

**Sarah:** “The kids of [this children's home] are a family and they all take care of each other.

When spending time with the kids, it's easy to forget they are orphans because they are so full of love and they are so happy. The kids are very mature and so smart and independent. The home makes sure that the kids attend school, have clothes and shoes, and food to eat.”

**Ruth:** “The home provides a family for children who are not lucky enough to have one....The [founders] provide an environment where each child is encouraged to be whatever they want to be and aim high.”

**Jennifer:** “Everyone has the same goals – make children's lives easier, happy/safe environment.”

**Sandra:** “grandma and madam are female figures.”

**Grace:** “the children are happy, educated, cared for (clothes, food), grandma is caring and respected.”

**Kylie:** “children are close like family - they look out for each other.”

**Emma:** “They are all very beautiful, happy children that always help out around the home. They love playing outside and are all dedicated to their studies.”

**Sarah:** “The best kids ever! The kids are very well behaved and independent. The kids love to attend school and love to learn and read. They also love to play! The kids are very grateful for what little they have, and every night during worship you hear them say “we are blessed.” The kids are very happy and have so much spirit, they are always smiling and laughing.”

**Ruth:** “The main word that sums up the children is happy. They are full of energy, curious and willing to learn, always laughing, smiling, helpful, considerate and most of show so much love and in return wish to be loved by all.”

**Linda:** “love, care, teach them the right thing, respect.”

**Charity:** “I hope I give support and assistance to the home, as and when they need it. I feel that I developed effective relationships with the children and was pleased that they often confided in me and asked for help.”

**Samuel:** “a father.”

**George:** “a mentor, a parent figure to challenge them and teach them and love them.”

**Themes of Research Question 2: Needs of Children's Homes in Ghana**

In this section of the paper the author will discuss each of the five themes that arose related to research question two. Research question two asked "What are the staff's perceptions of the basic needs of the homes in Ghana?". Within research question two, five themes emerged including inadequate housing, health care, food and water, education, and money. Throughout the four themes, a few sub-themes emerged as well. Under the education theme, sub-themes including school fees and better educational environments emerged.

**Theme 1: Inadequate Housing**

A total of 69.6% of study participants mentioned a need for adequate housing. For the children's homes in Ghana, housing was an important need that related to inadequate housing size, lack of separation for boys and girls, inability of the children's homes to purchase their own housing, and overcrowding leading to two or three children to a bed. Following are excerpts from respondents' comments consistent with this theme.

**Jane:** "Space for the kids is the main need." "There are two kids to every bed, some have three kids in a bed."

**Michael:** "Better facilities to sleep."

**Sarah:** "Currently the home needs a new building because the orphanage is split up and the staff lives separately from the kids so there is no one to supervise the kids that sleep in the orphanage."

**Grace:** "Beds, mats - lots of children are without mats - food, textbooks, school supplies."

**Ama:** "Boys and girls dormitory."

**George:** "Living space - they don't have any they own right now, it is all borrowed by the relatives of the founders"

## Theme 2: Health Care

The second theme that arose in research question two was health care. A need for health care was discussed in 52.2% of interviews in this study. According to interviews with study participants, the needs in terms of health care relate to mosquito nets, medicines, clean water, supplies, access to clinics, and health insurance. These needs were reported in some interviews alongside the presence of various illnesses, especially malaria and ringworm among the youth in Ghana's children's homes. Below are the responses pertaining to the theme of health care for the needs of children's homes in Ghana.

**Emma:** "The things that have been self-sustainable to help the orphanage; running water, water tank, items for the farm, health insurance."

**James:** "Medical supplies such as Band-Aids, plasters, alcohol."

**Helen:** "I think our help with education on medical care will probably prove the most useful to the home over time. Before the volunteers arrived, the kids and adults working at the home never went to the clinic. I can only hope that we provided some knowledge that the clinic, while you may get pricked, will help them get better and without going they could get very sick."

**Michael:** "Health insurance and a medicine supply.", "Health related help."

**George:** "Health insurance, food donations, the goat farm started, and a polytank for water storage."

**Emma:** "Other issues include children getting malaria. During my stay we fitted all the beds with mosquito nets, although keeping them in place with no holes can be difficult."

**Jane:** "Sickness – younger children are always having issues such as ringworm, hygiene, and proper medical care needed." "[It is] improving with new health insurance [because it] lowers costs for every visit and lowers the burden and increases ability for access [to health care]."

**Sarah:** “The kids also get sick with malaria because they don’t use their mosquito nets and don’t have proper shelter to protect them from the mosquitos. Many of the kids suffer from skin rashes from lack of hygiene or insects in the dirt.”

**Ruth:** “The children are constantly sick due to poor hygiene and insufficient immune systems.”  
“Malaria is very common throughout the home due to the children not sleeping under their nets.

### **Theme 3: Food and Water**

Another theme that emerged in research question two was a need for food and water, which was mentioned in 87% of the interviews. Looking at the various responses reported in interviews, the needs of the children’s homes in terms of food and water were reported to be a need for clean and running water sources, adequate amounts of food to feed the children, and money to buy food. The following are excerpts from interviews aligning with this theme.

**Emma:** “The priority is food and money, to enable adequate growth of the children.”

**Sarah:** “The kids could always use ...food donations and money to buy food...”

**Ruth:** “Donations from volunteers helps buy food.”

**Jodie:** “Running water, bathroom, sanitation, space, food, safer environment”

**George:** “food, some days they don’t get 3 meals a day.”

**Helen:** “I think that the biggest issues the kids experience are not getting enough to eat...”

**Sarah:** “When the home doesn’t have volunteers or food donations, the children may only eat one meal a day.”

**Sandra:** “Lack of food-run out, being in same place every day-don’t go out much

**Grace:** “food-the children scrape the bowl clean”

### **Theme 4: Education**

The fourth theme under the needs of children's homes in Ghana was education, which arose in 83% of interviews regarding research question two. The staff participating in the study reported needs that fit in two sub-themes within this category including school fees and better educational environments.

#### **Sub-theme 1: School Fees**

In sub-theme one, school fees, the need was for funding to pay school fees, which include books, uniforms, feeding fees, exam fees, and registration fees. For purposes of clarification, in many of the interviews, respondents discussed "free education" for primary school children because they attend the schools owned by the children's homes in which they live. While there are no registration or exam fees for these youth, it is important to understand that the primary school youth still have fees including feeding, uniform, book, transportation, and school supplies. At the children's homes' primary schools, if village youth attend the school then they pay minimal fees for feeding and registration to the children's home. For the older youth who attend junior high school and senior high school, these youth may have fees including registration fees and exam fees in addition to the primary school children's fees, which can be very expensive. The following are excerpts from interviews supporting this theme.

**Theresa:** "the orphanage school is free for orphans but village youth pay registration and feeding fees. School supplies- books, pencils, and uniforms are costs - the older junior high school and senior high school children have fees."

**Linda:** "Senior high school fees are paid with donations [from volunteers], and primary school there is no fees because it's the orphanage school."

**Emma:** The school is a private, non-government school. Therefore the school children that attend from the surrounding villages must pay daily. Although, as the [founder's] own the school, the children at the orphanage obviously receive a free education. Although the children that are older than class 4, and need to be educated at a higher level, go to the government school in the local village. This is a government run and funded school, therefore there are no school fees. However the children need to be provided with a school uniform and books. As well as at the start and end of each term the students need to bring a broom, as some form of compensation. These brooms are made from the tree branches and take much time to make. At each beginning and ending of a semester the entire family works together to ensure that all the older children attending the government school have a broom to bring.

**Sarah:** "The kids that attend the school run by the home do not have to pay, but school uniforms, books, and supplies are paid for with donations. The older kids who attend the senior high school have their school fees paid for by [volunteers]."

**Hope:** "The older pay fees", and "1cedi per day is the feeding fee of village kids at [the children's home's] school and a 5 cedi term fee for each village kid."

## **Sub-theme 2: Better Educational Environments**

In sub-theme two, better educational environments, the study participants reported a need for increased numbers of teachers, more attention from teachers, school busses, advanced educational opportunities, and tutoring. Below are responses that relate to this theme.

**Sandra:** "Higher quality of education."

**Theresa:** "a school bus to pick up kids because we are using a small car, computers..."

**Emma:** "Other help that has been most useful is tutoring classes, the children really enjoy learning with volunteers and it provides a fun aspect to learning."



**Emma:** “For some children school is difficult, the larger classes and lack of one-on-one teaching result in some children repeating grades more than once. This is a great opportunity for volunteers to help out the children in need.”

**Michael:** “Proper education, the children seem behind.”

**Hope:** “Most [children] have good English.” There is a need to “increase performance in school”

**James:** “Educational quality because teachers have low pay and low motivation, there is no aid, and it’s a relaxed environment.”

### **Theme 5: Money**

Nearly 96% of participants discussed the need for money in their interviews in relation to research question two. Analysis of interview responses yielded a high response rate to the need for money to provide a variety of basic necessities such as toys, food, clothes, bills, school related fees, running water, and health insurance. The following are responses from study participants pertaining to the theme of money within the needs of children’s homes in Ghana.

**Emma:** “The priority is food and money, to enable adequate growth of the children.”

**Sarah:** “The kids could always use new clothes, shoes, and food donations, and money to buy food.”

**Charity:** “The Children’s home needs a lot of financial help”

**Ruth:** “Money is obviously the number one need - they receive no government support and solely rely on donations from volunteers as well as school fees paid by day students at their school. Donations from volunteers helps buy food, pay teachers wages and pay bills but this does not make the home sustainable in itself. Money as well as knowledge is needed to help develop the school, expand the crops they grow at their farm etc.”

**Alice:** “Money for health, medicine, clean water, food, clean clothes, more staff.”

**Emma:** “The things that have been self-sustainable to help the orphanage; (running water, water tank, items for the farm, health insurance) All have helped to ease the financial burden that comes with caring for such a large family.”

**Sarah:** “The new poly tank that volunteers bought for the home is very useful. The smaller tank that they had before had to provide enough water for the kids to bathe, cook, and drink, as well as the volunteers bathing water. More than once, water was so short that the kids could not bathe. With the new poly tank, water shortage should no longer be an issue for the home.”

**Charity:** “Financial help, the home relies on donations to support them financially.”

**Samuel:** “food donations, monetary donations, volunteers.”

**Tracy:** “Sustainable projects through volunteers and church donations from local churches.”

**Emma:** “there is always a large turnover of new volunteers at the orphanage; they usually bring new balls, games and other toys to play with. Other necessities such as deodorant, and new pencils, etc., will be bought by [mother of home], although in times of financial hardship these are often gone without.”

**Sarah:** “The kids rely on donations from volunteers or local churches for food and basic necessities. Volunteers donate toys.”

**Summary of Chapter Four**

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the themes that arose under the two major research questions. Research question one, “What are the staff’s perceptions of the daily operations of children’s homes in Ghana?”, had five themes which related to a lack of funding, education, food, health care, and a sense of familiness. Under the themes of education, food, and health care sub-themes emerged that were detailed and discussed. Within research question two, “What are the staff’s perceptions of the basic needs of the homes in Ghana?”, five themes emerged related to adequate housing, health care, food and water, education, and money. Sub-themes also were present in research question two for the theme of education. The researcher explained the sub-themes for education in this section. In addition, the chapter discussed the demographics of research participants in this study and provided a table of the demographic statistics.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Implications and Conclusion**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the implications of the research findings based on the major themes that arose through data analysis. The research findings are relevant to the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), other Ghanaian governmental organizations, and the international aid community. The researcher will detail the ways in which this study's findings impact and inform the three groups. Moreover, the researcher will provide her suggestions for future efforts, aid, and management for children's homes in Ghana and the orphaned population.

#### **Implications for the Department of Social Welfare**

The researcher discovered 10 major themes for the two principal research questions. Research question one asks "What are the staff's perceptions of the daily operations of children's homes in Ghana?". Five themes emerged for research question one related to a lack of funding, education, food, health care, and a sense of familiness. Research question two asks "What are the staff's perceptions of the basic needs of the homes in Ghana?". Five themes emerged for research question two including inadequate housing, health care, food and water, education, and money.

The findings in this research study are especially important for the DSW in Ghana. The DSW is delegated to oversee all affairs for child welfare programs and institutions in the country, and thus the themes that arose under each research question have implications for the DSW's policies and practices. Although the themes that arose in this study were specific to a sample of four children's homes, the children's homes across Ghana are similar in operational structure and the needs are clearly great for Ghana's orphaned youth. This researcher's findings indicate that the current conditions of Ghana's children's homes are not meeting the basic needs of youth.

This researcher believes the children's homes' inability to maintain a certain standard of living is a violation of the children's basic human rights. While the results of this research suggest a low standard of care in children's homes, this study's results also supported that the children's homes want to provide a family environment for the youth in which the children are nurtured and can thrive. Ultimately, the instability of resources and overcrowding in the homes seems to hinder the ability of the children's homes to provide adequate care standards that they wish to deliver. Thus, this researcher suggests that the DSW make a series of changes within the children's homes to create better living environments for orphaned youth including closing children's homes; focusing on a smaller number of homes to adequately fund; and increasing family reunification initiatives.

Moreover, previous research suggests that the majority of youth in children's homes have one or more living parents (Save the Children, 2009). Since many orphaned youth have living relatives who can care for them, this researcher proposes that the DSW create programs that reunite orphaned youth with living relatives who are deemed suitable by the DSW to care for the youth. If the DSW builds family reunification into the operations of children's homes, then the children's homes will be less likely to over extend themselves. As youth enter children's home, other youth will transition out of residential care through family reunification. Finally, the findings of this study suggest that children's homes are lacking adequate resources, and thus, if family reunification initiatives are started, then Ghana's children's homes can better meet the needs of the orphaned youth.

Another recommendation based on the findings of this study is for the DSW to close a portion of Ghana's children's homes and focus on fewer homes across the country to support with supervision and resources. Limiting the number of children's homes will increase the ability

of remaining children's homes to gain adequate funding and create safer housing environments to support the basic needs of orphaned youth. This initiative works alongside this researcher's recommendation to decrease the amount of youth in children's homes by increasing the number of youth reunified with family. Hence, this researcher suggests that the DSW keep the children's homes in strategic locations that provide access for all areas across Ghana to reach the services provided by the homes. Though it will take a period of time to gradually close homes and reunify children with suitable relatives, these actions will aid Ghana in long-term efforts to de-institutionalize orphaned youth and strengthen the value of the family.

The last suggestion based on this study's findings is for the DSW to ensure that there is a social worker from their department connected with every children's home across Ghana. If the DSW can serve as an overarching governing system for the structure and operations of children's homes, then every home, public or private, will be held accountable for the standards of care it provides. The many challenges for children's homes outlined in the themes of this study's findings imply that the homes are in need of more resources, and thus, the DSW can serve as a mentoring organization to the staff of children's homes. As a support to children's homes, the DSW can give support and teach the children's homes how to create more efficient systems to meet the basic needs of orphaned youth. The DSW can also guide homes through the process of family reunification and the protocol for taking youth into children's homes to ensure youth have a plan to eventually transition out of the home and into permanent family care.

Overall, the findings of this research provide a basis for the DSW to understand the functioning of Ghana's children's homes, their limitations, and their strengths. These findings give the DSW guidance in continuing their efforts to de-institutionalize orphaned youth and explore options for kinship care.

**Implications for Other Ghanaian Governmental Organizations**

A group in Ghana that has a key role in the operations of children's homes in Ghana aside from the DSW is Ghanaian policy makers. Ghana's parliament holds the responsibility of governing the operations and funding of Ghana's ministries, departments, and agencies (Parliament of Ghana, 2014). Ghana's DSW falls under the governance of Ghana's parliament, and thus this study's findings are relevant to Ghana's parliament because this study's results can better inform the policy makers' decisions surrounding the DSW. This researcher's findings suggest that the children's homes disparity in resources lowers the standard of living at the homes for orphaned youth, and these results can provide Ghana's parliament with the knowledge to make better informed decisions in relation to the DSW. Often times, governmental figures may not have the opportunity to go into the field and see the situation firsthand, and thus, the themes of this study's results give Ghana's government important information that may improve their support for the DSW. If Ghana's parliament sees the great needs across Ghana's children's homes outlined in this study, they may be more inclined to increase funding to the DSW. When the funding grows for the DSW, they will be able to increase the reach and quality of their services for orphaned youth.

**Implications for the International Aid Community**

Taking a broader view of those involved with Ghana's children's homes, the findings of this research study have significant implications for the international aid community. The international aid community is comprised of the various non-governmental organizations, churches, and donors involved in the operations of Ghana's children's homes. This study gives an often unheard perspective of the operations of children's homes by gathering information from the staff of children's homes. Through the perspective of the children's home staff

members, this study's findings inform the global aid community on the specific areas of need that are most important to the Ghana's children's homes. The ten themes outlined in this study's results offer guidance for where to direct aid in a manner that will allow for increased empowerment and self-sustainability of the homes. Gaining a better understanding of the functioning of Ghana's children's homes through this study's findings provides the global community with an opportunity to more effectively give their resources and time. Ultimately, these findings provide a platform for improved relationships, understanding, and giving among the international aid community and the staff and youth of Ghana's children's homes.

### **Going Back to Ghana's Roots**

This study's research findings have brought attention to the negative impact of overcrowded conditions in Ghana's children's homes, which has led to exhaustion in funding at the homes. A lack of funding hinders the children's homes' ability to meet the basic needs of the youth in their care, thus limiting the growth of Ghana's orphaned youth. To fully comprehend the findings of this research study, it is vital to return to Ghana's roots and consider the current conditions of Ghana's children's homes in a historical context. Prior to colonization, kinship care was a key element of Ghanaian culture (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2012), but today the strong ties among kin has weakened (Akpalu, 2007) and more youth are being placed into residential care, and more specifically children's homes. During colonization, the British used the strategy of divide and conquer among Ghanaians, which implied destroying the unity among Africans to be able to weaken their ability for uprisings and increase internal wars to kill Africans (Shillington, 2005). Although Ghanaians have since rebuilt their nations, to some extent the British were successful in leaving a lasting impact on the breakdown in the family, as has been shown in growing numbers of children's homes across Ghana (DSW, 2011c).



Despite weakening family ties, this researcher recommends that Ghanaians return to their roots and rebuild kinship care. If Ghana's kinship strengthens, then the next of kin could take on the responsibility of a child when a family member passes away or is unable to care for a youth. An option for orphaned youth to be cared for in a children's home should always be present, especially for orphaned youth without living relatives or with relatives not suitable for childcare, but overall Ghana must reclaim responsibility for childcare within the family. If the value of kinship care is re-instilled in Ghanaians, many youth would not face as many hardships as they do in children's homes where the staff struggles to meet their basic needs. Additionally, kinship care would lower the number of youth in children's homes and increase their ability to provide a higher quality standard of living for orphaned youth. Right now this is not possible when homes have thirty or sixty youth at a time. In all, this researcher recommends Ghanaians focus on their native symbol, Sankofa, which means to go back and fetch (Webb-Johnson, 2006). Sankofa represents the return to one's past to learn and be better informed for how to live in the present and plan for the future (Webb-Johnson, 2006). If the country as a whole can practice the ideals of Sankofa, Ghanaians can "go back and fetch" kinship care from their past and integrate it as a platform of Ghanaian society today. Overall, family care among Ghanaians offers Ghanaian youth the opportunity to be placed in environments that will increase their chances of meeting their basic needs and allow them to thrive in a thriving family system. If youth are raised in environments that are capable of properly nurturing them, even the most vulnerable of youth will be given the opportunity to reach their fullest potential and positively contribute to Ghanaian society.

**Summary of Chapter Five**

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the importance of this study's findings for the DSW, Ghana's parliament, and the international aid community. The researcher also provided a historical context for understanding the situation surrounding Ghana's children's homes and the current orphan crisis. To begin to address these issues, this researcher proposed a return to Ghana's roots, which are tied in kinship care. Overall, this researcher detailed her recommendations for future efforts related to Ghana's children's homes and Ghana's orphaned youth population in order to create a better future that allows even the most vulnerable of Ghana's youth to thrive.

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**Appendices**

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**Verbal Interview Script for Researcher**

## Script for Research Assistants

Hello, thank you for meeting me today. My name is Hannah Bonacci. I am an undergraduate student researcher at the Ohio State University in the U.S.A., and I am studying the operations of children's homes in Ghana through the view of their staff members. Are you a staff member over the age of 17?

(If he/she says "No", thank him/her and then leave.)

(If he says, "Yes", proceed.)

As a children's home staff member, would you be willing to talk to me about your work? I am very interested in your opinions and I would like to ask you some specific questions about being a staff member that will take about 20 minutes to answer. I am trying to better understand the operations of the children's homes and how life is for individuals involved with the home. I will also compensate you by paying you 5 GHC for your time. Are you still willing to participate in this study?

(If he/she says "No", thank him/her and then leave.)

(If he says, "Yes", proceed.)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Your participation is voluntary and you are allowed to quit at any time. You can decline to answer any questions as well as stop participating at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits. The information you share with me will be very helpful and valuable. The results can enhance our understanding of children's homes in Ghana from the Ghanaian perspective. I want you to know there is no risk of a breach of confidentiality and I will not link your name to anything you say in the transcript of this interview or in any of my publications. By answering these questions, you are giving consent to

participate in this study. I will read each item to you and then will record your answer on this survey. I do not need your name or signature. When I return to the United States, I will be writing up the results from all of the combined surveys in an article for publication. Do you have any questions?

Before we begin, can we stand or sit over here where it is a little quieter and more private?

Thank you. [Note: Move to a quiet and private place if not in one already.] Okay, let's begin. I will start with some general questions about your background before advancing to the significant research questions of this study.

(Complete the survey.)

Thank you for your time. I would like to give you 5 GHC for your time. Is there another staff member here you can refer me to?

(If he/she says "No", thank him/her and then leave.)

(If he says, "Yes", proceed.)

Thanks. Where can I find him/her?

(Follow the respondent to the next potential respondent or go where the respondent says the next potential respondent is located.)

-----Repeat the script over again when approaching the next respondent.

### **Instrument**

#### **Demographics**

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you from?
4. What is your career interest or area of study?
5. What is your highest level of education?

#### **Operations Questions**

1. When was the home established and for what purpose?
2. Who established the home?
3. Is the staff of the home paid?
4. Who are the caretakers of the children?
5. How often do caretakers of the home change?
6. What are the funding sources for the home?
7. Describe the home's connection to the Department of Social Welfare?
8. What are the needs of the home?
9. Describe the challenges facing the home?
10. What are the successes accomplished by the home?
11. Describe the types of kids you take in?
12. What are the criteria for bringing a child into the home?
13. How many children are in the home?
14. What are the ages of the children in the home?
15. Describe the children's contact with relatives?

16. How many of the children in the home are without both parents?
17. Describe your daily duties?
18. How many hours per day are you with the children?
19. What resources does the staff provide for the home?
20. What resources does the home provide for the children?
21. Describe the help that has been most useful for the home?
22. How often do the children attend school?
23. Where do the children attend school?
24. How are school fees paid for?
25. What are the biggest issues that the children face?
26. Describe the toys and resources available to the children?
27. How are the relations between the home and the local community?
28. Describe the relations between the children of the home and the children of the local community?